

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

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| In the Matter of |) | |
| |) | |
| Annual Assessment of the Status of |) | MB Docket No. 12-203 |
| Competition in the Market for the |) | |
| Delivery of Video Programming |) | |

**COMMENTS OF
Dakota Media Access**

Dakota Media Access (DMA) submits these comments in response to the above-captioned Notice of Inquiry (“NOI”), released July 20, 2012, seeking “data, information, and comment on the state of competition in the delivery of video programming.”

Dakota Media Access is a North Dakota non-profit, 501(C) (3) corporation with a volunteer board of directors drawn from the community. Originally incorporated in 1987 as Community Access Television, the organization was renamed Dakota Media Access in 2008 to better reflecting the changing media landscape and the services we provide to the community. DMA serves the cities of Bismarck and Mandan, North Dakota by managing the production facilities, equipment, programming and distribution systems for the area’s public, educational and governmental media needs.

Midcontinent Communications, our local cable operator, provides two (2) cable channels for PEG programming. One channel is designated for Government programming and the other for Public and Educational access programs. Both channels are accessible on the cable system’s Basic Tier and no special equipment is needed to view.

We are fortunate to have maintained our local franchising authority and our organization is valued as an important communications tool for the community. Dakota Media Access strengthens our community by building partnerships and networks to leverage emerging technology for non-profits, government, education and other organizations that would not otherwise have this capability.

Due to the implementation of statewide video franchising, other PEG operations across the country have not been as fortunate as ours. The change has left some communities with defunded or closed operations, eliminating coverage of local government meetings, high school sports and local cultural events. In addition, PEG channels have been relegated to higher cable tiers, requiring increased subscription fees and/or additional equipment to view.

We urge the FCC to preserve community media and prevent discriminatory industry practices targeted at PEGs. We need federal policies that provide the transmission and resources essential to operating our community media centers and ask the FCC to restore effective, fair local cable franchising that has been lost in many states.

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